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Let's Talk About

WHEN JOE COMES HOME

and Comes Back to the Farm

JOE'S COMING BACK from the war some day. What are you planning to do for him? What is your community planning to do?

Do you know what's going to be uppermost in Joe's mind when he comes back? His folks, of course—his family or his best girl. And he'll be glad to be home. But he's also going to be worried about a job—whether he'll have a job, and what kind of a job it will be. He'll want to do something useful to help himself as well as the community and the country.

When Joe comes back, what will you have to offer him? The problem of finding jobs for all those who come back may be so big that not all folks will be able to take care of their own. The whole community will have to pitch in and help.

Should we depend on "government" for what we can do ourselves? We can help a lot by giving our neighbors and the community a helping hand.

He Is Already Coming Back

This business of getting Joe a job is not simply a task for the future with plenty of time for planning. The armed forces are already discharging men at the rate of 100,000 a month. This means that an average of 25 to 30 men are coming back to every county in the Nation—each month and right now. More than a million men have already been so discharged to reenter civil life. Let's all pitch in now to help these deserving men. From this experience we can learn how to solve the bigger problem of complete demobilization later on.

We all know about the labor shortages—in the factories, on the farm, and in the stores. The men in the services have heard about them, too. What will they think if they come back and have trouble finding jobs? Are they already having this experience in your community?

If we cannot fit into some useful occupation these relatively few men who are already coming back, what can we expect when the war ends with millions of men wanting work? These men want jobs, and there is plenty of work to be done. Giving these men an opportunity to do what they want to do—to get a job—is everyone's individual responsibility. It is a matter for community organization as well.

Those who are coming home now are every bit as much in need of help as will be those who come home after the war. For Joe is coming home now because he has been wounded or is sick or has been so mentally upset as to need a good rest. He will want to keep occupied. He certainly should not have to worry about getting a job. Some of those who are coming home now have lost an arm or a leg—young men, most of them, who deserve the best any community can offer. Some are going to be blind, in one eye or both.

Yes, it takes a strong man to work on a farm or in the factory, a man in full possession of his powers. But there are many men who, through no fault of their own, are right now being discharged from the armed services because they are not able to carry on there. Something must be done now to fit these men back into civil life. And the more we do, ourselves, the less need there will be for governmental agencies to do this necessary service.

What are you going to do if Joe comes limping home or has to use a crutch? Or if he can reach out only one arm to greet you? Don't just stand there and cry or gaze at him. He'll sense what you're doing, even if he cannot see. So you'd better prepare yourself to meet him with a genuine smile and a hearty welcome home, no matter what the war has done to him.

Do you know that some of the men who are returning now are so afraid of what they'll have to face when they come home that they are practicing what to say or do? Don't you think it would be better if we ourselves did

some practicing, or at least thought out beforehand what we can and should do to make Joe feel at home again?

He'll be glad to see you, of course. But he'll be happier still if you can suggest, soon after welcoming him, that he become a partner on the farm, or in the business, or if you can offer him a definite job that will assure him a living. He'll need a job more than anything else, a job that he can handle in spite of physical handicaps. And if you have no relative in the services, or if your son is not coming back, how about helping some neighbor's son?

Here's a man who has come home to his young wife. She has a job and would like to give it up to make a home for him. He lost his right hand. And the only job he has found so far is one that is not equal to his abilities. What he earns at this job is not enough to keep them both. So his wife keeps on working. She's not bothered by that; she's glad and willing to do it. But she's worried about him. They don't want clothes, they don't worry about money. They both want him to have a job that will make better use of his ability.

Has your community an organization that can take care of Joe "right now" when he comes home? Do you work with the group? Many communities have already done something—they've listed the currently available jobs; they've also figured out the amount of buying they will do after the war and the jobs this will create in the community itself and in nearby factories and shops. If there's a recognized shortage of labor in your farm community, has some local farm agency or organization listed any definitely available jobs and tried to fill them with men who have returned from the service?

Every State has resources and organizations available for helping in this matter: the State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the State Agency for the Blind, United States Employment Service, to name a few. Get in touch with them, especially their local facilities, including those of the Veterans Administration. Find out what provisions your State has for veterans who have service-connected disabilities. But also find out how your local community can supplement these Government agencies and facilities.

Is Your Community Organized?

You, as an individual can do a lot to solve this problem of jobs for returned soldiers. But the problem is too big for you alone, even to take care of your own

relatives and friends. If you haven't heard or read about the accomplishment of towns like Albert Lea, Minn., or cities like Portland on the Pacific Coast, you might ask your friends and neighbors about them or write to the United States Department of Agriculture for this information. Early in the war, the city of York, Pa., organized for war work and showed what community organization can do.

Your community may already be organized for the task. But many communities are not. If your community is already organized to welcome the returning men, do you have your own part in the work arranged for?

What is needed most are private organizations enabling all citizens to take part in the common effort. How about your chamber of commerce or other local business and professional groups? How about the local unit of your national farm organization? In some communities a brand-new organization may have to be started. Before you attempt to do this, though, you'd better make sure whether a group has already been set up or see whether some existing local organization could serve. Then, if at all possible, join it, get your assignment, and get busy.

Your community organization can best function by finding the jobs, classifying them, and then fitting the jobs and the home-coming boys together. Often, existing qualifications need to be supplemented by further training, so Joe can perform the job well. This training must sometimes be given before he starts the job, and also after he has begun working on it.

In canvassing the community and listing the job possibilities, get folks to say definitely what jobs they have to offer the returning servicemen. Work with farm leaders, town or city industrialists, and businessmen. Don't accept general statements or promises, but list the jobs and their requirements separately. On farms, list the names of the farm owners and the kind of work they want done.

Congress has provided discharge payments of \$100 to \$300—but such a sum will not last Joe long. Until this law was passed, some men discharged from the armed forces didn't even have adequate clothes. But they aren't looking to charity for clothes and food; they are looking for jobs.

A man may already have taken advantage of some of the training courses offered by the Army or Navy, and he may come back better equipped for a skilled job than

when he left home. But many did not take advantage of such training work, or some may be handicapped by wounds or illness.

Some may wish to take retraining courses offered by the Veterans Administration under the provisions of the "G. I. Bill of Rights."

It may be the practical thing for them to take that course in their own home State or community. Have you any vocational training courses that Joe can take and that will fit him for the job? And do you know all about the benefits to which he is entitled under the "G. I. Bill of Rights" and other provisions by the Congress? Are you prepared to advise him to whom he should go in order to fit his training course to his prospective job?

In every county of the United States, Joe is a potential source of manpower. But he needs your help in finding out where he is needed. Your community organization may have to do some classification of the jobs available, you may have to find out what each man can do best, or you may have to help organize vocational training courses. But see to it that Joe gets a job that makes him feel that any battle front or other service sacrifice he has made was not in vain.

Discharged for Physical Reasons

Wounded or sick men will, of course, be taken care of in the hospitals of the armed forces. They will not be discharged from hospitals or rest camps until everything now possible by medical science has been done for them. Artificial limbs will be provided, plastic surgery will do wonders. But there will still be much to do from the point where modern medical science leaves off. That's where we come in.

The wealth of a country is not in its money bags or its buildings, but in the productive capacity of its citizens. And the self-respect of the individual citizen depends largely on his own ability to contribute to the national production and to receive his share of the returns.

Now, a man who has lost an arm or a leg or an eye is ordinarily handicapped in contributing his share to the Nation's work. If he loses a part of his body in battle, he is conscious of that incapacity and he feels it a hundredfold more if he is likely to be a burden to the community. It is here that you can be at fault or can be of great help, not only to this sick or wounded or recovering man, personally, but also to the country. You are a part of the environment in which that man is going to make a comeback.

But remember this: In many cases, the loss of a limb or an eye definitely is not a handicap. Many a man has contributed more to society after such a loss than before. The thing to do is to help him to get the right job—the place where he can really contribute and be happy.

Don't expect the Government or the community or certain organizations to do it all. True democracy, the thing this man fought and sacrificed for, is a way of life in which every individual assumes certain responsibilities and pitches in and does what he sees needs to be done. There are many things you can do to help Joe recover from his wounds or sickness and overcome any physical handicaps he might have. Medical science needs your supplementary help. Even the vocational training given in the armed services may have been incomplete.

Joe may want to go back to the same job he had before he entered the armed forces. That job certainly ought to be open to him. But he may need some help in readjusting himself even to it, because of his physical handicaps. He may not want to go back to his old job; particularly if he has fitted himself for something else—perhaps something better. There are many jobs, even on a farm, that a partly incapacitated worker can do just as well as anyone else. Joe may need your helping hand to get the right training. Above all, avoid prejudices.

Let's try to regard each returning man as a deserving citizen, ready to face a certain amount of inevitable competition, rather than as a case deserving of pity. Remember, all he wants is a fair break.

And here's another thing we must understand about Joe. If he's been in the armed forces he's been roused in the morning and put to bed at night by the bugle, his meals have been ready for him and he's been marched to them, his daily routine has all been laid out for him, and often he's been told definitely what to do in the evenings. For him suddenly to assume the responsibilities of farm work is asking a great deal. For farm work is diversified, it's highly technical, it involves decisions on the spot. In farming, a man is pretty largely on his own. The handling of horses, milking of cows, and feeding of livestock require experience, good judgment, and responsibility. Workers need in-service training on farms as much as in any other job they may be called upon to do.

But our main job is going to be our own attitude toward that sick or maimed soldier or sailor. He doesn't want to be cried over, and he doesn't want to be bossed around or coddled. He is an equal, a fellow who wants

to do his share of the work. Think through beforehand how you will handle the situation when Joe comes home. Practice if you must. But meet him foursquare and do your best to have a job waiting for him.

Each of us, in our own community, will have to decide how best to help. But we will do well to avoid making the job picture too rosy. Make it realistic.

It will be better to let Joe know that there are some problems to be faced than to "overtalk" and then have opportunities fall short of what we promise. He will be among the first to understand that he still lives in a land of competition.

If only a few thousand men were coming back, there might be a "best" job for every one of them. Actually there will be millions returning for jobs. They will be competing with one another, within their own group, for the best places. Why not let them feel that they still live in a land of free enterprise where, along with the help of others, one must also put forth his own efforts? Joe will like this because that is the sort of country for which he fought.

Discharged on Mental Grounds

Now let's face the most difficult situation of all—the mental case. For many of these men have had psychological upsets. Of all men discharged from the armed forces to date—over a million—some 45 percent have been discharged on mental grounds. This may seem to be a high percentage, but it is actually about the usual percentage of all patients in our hospitals, even in peacetime. Perhaps this war will bring home to us what has been a condition or a fact for a long time, a situation that we probably didn't know much about.

It's no disgrace to any man if he happens to "fold up" under the circumstances of the battlefield, especially if he's been brought up in a quiet home and a peaceful community. The noise of battle alone drives some men "crazy," and the constant fear of being shot or shelled or bombed is just as bad. Imagine having three ships in succession torpedoed from under you! Or, imagine seeing your best friend—your buddy—blown into an indescribable mass of lacerated flesh and blood. It's a wonder so many men come out of it as well as they do.

Many of the men now being released from the armed forces have not been near the battlefields. They have cracked up in "boot camp" or even on the way there. They couldn't "take it" even during the training period,

although they would have been quite normal had they remained in civilian life. And do you know why? It wasn't just because they were "that kind of fellow." Often conditions in a boy's home did not prepare him for this experience; or often conditions in school and in the community, which contributed to his behavior, have existed uncorrected and little understood for years.

So let's not waste time blaming him for what's happened—or the home or the school or the community. Let's not blame anybody; let's correct the conditions. If the community will pitch in now to deal with such problems better than it ever did before, Joe will get the break he needs.

By meeting the present emergency, you and your community will be all the better fitted to deal with the more serious cases of battle neurosis and psychosis that are expected later.

The worst mental cases are being taken care of in hospitals, where many of them are really being cured. To date, some 60 percent of these persons have been discharged from the mental hospitals as cured—an encouraging fact. But the permanence of that cure rests largely with the community to which they return, and it rests largely with you.

PSYCHIATRISTS KNEW long before Pearl Harbor how large a percentage of Americans were suffering from emotional disturbances that might put them in the class of psychoneurotics; knew what conflict and tension could do to human beings. Moreover, they knew that every man has his breaking point and that it was just a question of whether the point was a low threshold or high.

Now the war has brought these things home to other Americans with blockbuster emphasis. The language of psychiatry is still pretty baffling, but the problem that psychiatrists have had to tackle is so big, so clear-cut that nobody can fail to grasp it.—*The Washington Post*, May 28, 1944, reporting the results of the one hundredth annual convention of the American Psychiatric Association, held in Philadelphia, May 1944.

Once Joe has been admitted to a hospital for mental treatment, he cannot again return to the armed forces. An airplane pilot who survives a crack-up is hustled off into an airplane again as rapidly as possible to cure any nervous effects of the accident; a submarine crew, experiencing an involuntary submerging, is soon sent to "take her down" again. Physically wounded soldiers and sailors, if not incapacitated physically or by real psychoses, and after a sufficient time for cure and rest, return to their places in the ranks or on board ship. But not so with the Joe who has been admitted to a hospital for mental treatment.

But this unfortunate experience need not prevent him from becoming readjusted to civil life. If properly treated at home and in the neighborhood, he should have little difficulty in becoming usefully and gainfully occupied. Here is where you and your community again come in. Your attitude and that of the community will

THE SYMPTOMS OF psychoneuroses surround us—not only in the Army, but in everyday life—the mother constantly overconcerned about her children, who is incapable of an instant's relaxation; the father "worried sick" over finances and suffering from strange body sensations; the child afraid of the dark, who has tantrums and vomits without apparent cause; the jilted girl who takes to her bed with an inexplicable paralysis, though no physician can detect an organic cause.

These are psychoneurotics. Organically, there is nothing wrong with these people, yet all are suffering, all are incapacitated to varying degrees. Their difficulties, anxieties, illnesses are expressions of mental conflict or problems either unrecognized by them or, if recognized, not solved. . . . Of all the psychoneurotic cases treated by the Army in this war, not one has been proved to be a malingerer.—COL. WM. C. MENNINGER, *Army Psychiatric Chief*. (Army document now being distributed throughout the Army.)

have a lot to do with the success Joe has in hitting his old stride again. Are you ready to contribute your share toward salvaging these potentially good citizens and constructive workers?

A democratic society, in which every individual is equally valuable, will not tolerate the methods of Nazi Germany. But, much as we may condemn the ruthless methods of our enemies, our thoughtless behavior and careless remarks directed toward the unfortunate "mental case" may differ only in degree of cruelty from Nazi methods. The family and the community can make life so miserable for Joe, even after he has been cured, as to make him wish that he had never come back.

Have some properly qualified doctor come to tell your local organization about the problems of mental hygiene and tell you what to read. Discuss the problem among yourselves. And then formulate a plan of action for your own community.

Do you remember the stigma that used to attach itself to those who were afflicted with tuberculosis? Now that we have gone so far in controlling this dreaded disease, let's look back and see whether that stigma, directed toward the "T. B.'s," ever helped one iota in curing the person or making his life more bearable. Did such stigmas help society or did they merely make the people who constituted that society more smugly cruel, even though unwittingly? We have barely gotten over the same attitude toward cancer; and we have not yet learned to treat syphilis from a viewpoint that would help the public welfare. Are we going to handicap these war-connected mental cases the same way, by whispers, murmurs, and lifted eyebrows, or are we going to control our attitudes and direct them toward an individual and community form of behavior that will help restore these men to a normal life? One of the tasks your mental-hygiene society can set for itself is to develop a more wholesome, more helpful, and more sensible attitude in your community. Particularly, you might also provide recreational facilities for all the folks of your community, into which these men can fit when they come home.

Psychiatry will have done what it can when they let these men come back to you. It's up to you and the community to carry on from that point and do what more is needed. Joe will be moved from one hospital floor to another, or from one ward to another, as he shows that he is getting to be himself again. When he shows in his behavior that he is ready for it, he will be restored to society. But all the skill of modern scientific treat-

ment, and all the patience of sympathetic doctors and nurses, may go for naught if Joe's family or his community do not carry on from that point and treat him as a useful member of the family and of the community.

The situation is somewhat like that in cases of stammering or stuttering. Formerly, those who "took the cure" returned to their own homes or home towns, only to meet with many thoughtless people who by act and word showed that they expected relapses of unfortunate behavior. Now, the convalescents are advised to go somewhere else, where the environment of things and people will not undo the good that the cure has done for them.

Will this be necessary in the case of a man who broke under the strain of camp and training or actual battle? As a matter of fact, much of our national history has been determined by the fact that people moved on westward, away from communities where they couldn't make a go of life, where stigmas might attach to them. And many a man and woman made a success of life in another place where people didn't know of their previous lives.

But that new land and "elsewhere" no longer exist to invite the more ambitious or the more obstreperous members of our older communities. The great open country has been filled up with people and more and more folks live their adult lives in the same communities where they were born or grew up as children.

Perhaps it would be well for this victim of battle strain to leave his home community to try to make a go of it somewhere else, where people don't know what he's been through—or to leave the farm for the city. But wouldn't it be better if everyone back home would try to help restore him to a position of self-confidence and self-reliance and social responsibility in his own community?

Mary's Coming Back, Too

All this while, we've been talking about Joe, but let's not forget that a lot of Marys will also be coming back home—yes, even from the battlefield, from hospitals, from desks. Some will not want to come back. After having a taste of freedom from household cares, these women may want to stay on the job. And many a woman has learned that she can do the job as well as her brother did. But conditions may force her back.

She'll be discharged from the WAC and the WAVES and the nursing corps, and from the Government desk. And when Joe comes home, he'll probably want his returning girl friend to devote her main efforts to making a home for him. He may also have some ideas as to what her working is doing toward filling jobs his friends need.

Yes, some women also are being killed and wounded in line of battle. And some are buckling under the strain of war and long hours and abnormal conditions. So they, too, will need your help. They may have as many adjustments to make as the men.

Are you preparing yourself to help the men and women who are coming back to your farm and your community? Thousands of them—yes, a million of them—have already returned to what they expect to be a more normal life. Are your homes and your community meeting them halfway with normal attitudes? Have you been making some adjustments yourself, to meet this situation, or will Joe and Mary find it harder to get along in the community than when they left?

Have we enough jobs ready for them to keep them busy, to earn a living, and to get their minds off their war experiences? Or are we going to allow our uncontrolled attitudes, our careless words, and our inexcusable behavior to create such an abnormal environment for them that they'll want to leave home, leave the farm, or leave town—or so they may even have to return to the hospital for treatment your helpfulness could prevent?

How about a cheerful greeting and a job—the best welcome Joe and Mary could wish for? How about some hard work toward organizing your community and pegging away day by day to list those jobs and develop some training courses, so that they can fit themselves for those jobs? Let's make productive citizens out of every one of them. How about some practical Christianity? Let's make democracy work!

*United States Department of Agriculture
Bureau of Agricultural Economics
September 1944*

